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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [SCUL](#) [KMPI](#) [EAID](#) [SA](#)
SUBJECT: DEMOCRACY STRATEGY AND GOALS: SAUDI ARABIA

REF: A. 07 STATE 130991
[1](#)B. 07 RIYADH 2085

Classified By: NEA DAS Kent Patton for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (SBU) The Department approves Embassy Riyadh,s proposed democracy strategy for the next twelve to eighteen months as discussed on April 9 via video conference. This cable summarizes the Department's understanding of the new strategy, which is an update to Embassy Riyadh,s previous democracy strategy (Ref B).

UPDATED DEMOCRACY STRATEGY

[1](#)2. (C) Embassy Riyadh identified seven reform areas for the next twelve to eighteen months: preparation for Majlis Al-Shoura (Shoura) Council and Municipal Council elections (2009), religious tolerance, education reform, women,s empowerment, economic reform, judicial reform, and freedom of association.

[1](#)3. (C) Objective 1: Support Shoura Council in advance of Municipal Council elections planned for 2009. Implementation Strategy:

-- Expand exchange programs, especially those that enable new municipal council members and Shoura Council members to meet U.S. counterparts. In particular, provide exchanges that seek to expose members to independent legislative bodies at the local, state, and national levels.

-- Use public diplomacy efforts on the democratic process in an effort to expand participation in 2009 Shoura Council elections.

-- Provide technical assistance in advance of 2009 elections to ensure voters are enfranchised and the election is free and fair.

[1](#)4. (C) Objective 2: Promote increased religious tolerance in the Kingdom. Implementation Strategy:

-- Encourage SAG to increase efforts to remove intolerant language from religious and other textbooks used in public schools.

-- Provide assistance to SAG and King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies to assist Saudi King Abdullah bin Abd al-Aziz (Abdullah) in promoting the interfaith dialogue he began with Pope Benedict.

[1](#)5. (C) Objective 3: Expand education reform, particularly in the Saudi higher education realm. Implementation Strategy:

-- Observe the creation of a classical Political Science degree program at King Saud University, in partnership with University of Delaware, with special attention to changes in students, world view.

-- Support SAG,s archeology initiative to begin excavation of Islamic and pre-Islamic sites in the Kingdom, facilitating access to experts within US universities.

¶6. (C) Objective 4: Support expansion of women,s participation in all sectors of Saudi society, especially political, business, and private sectors. Implementation Strategy:

-- Obtain SAG political commitment to include women in the planned 2009 elections, as well as future elections.

-- Assist in building capacity of women in business through education and training programs by working through chambers of commerce in Riyadh and Jeddah.

-- Encourage and support the women,s Breast Cancer Partnership initiative, launched with the First Lady of the United States, visit in October 2007, as an avenue of steady and measured progress for women,s empowerment within the Kingdom.

¶7. (C) Objective 5: Support continued economic reform, including improved labor conditions. Implementation Strategy:

-- Support SAG efforts to expand labor market, with a particular focus on reversing trends in youth unemployment.

-- Provide technical assistance and training for regulatory development initiatives to reform SAG regulatory agencies. Build from the success of visits by Supreme Appeals Court judges to the US to discuss intellectual property rights.

¶8. (C) Objective 6: Support judicial reform. Implementation Strategy:

-- Support DRL and CLDP legal exchange program to be initiated with a visit of ten Saudi judges to the US during the fall 2008.

-- Support pilot program for some members of first graduating class of women lawyers in the Kingdom, and provide exchange programs and additional legal training to assist in the success of these women.

-- Utilize visit programs for Human Rights Commissioners, journalists, and educators to expose a wider audience to global perspectives. Pushing for future judicial reforms in the areas of intellectual property, human rights, and rule of law from within the judiciary might not succeed without broader support.

¶9. (C) Objective 7: Support freedom of association. Implementation Strategy:

-- Promote the establishment of the first non-governmental organization (NGO) in the Kingdom.

POINT OF CONTACT

¶10. (SBU) Please contact NEA/PI Charles Kiamie at (202) 776-8841 or KiamieCE@state.sgov.gov for any necessary further background information.
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